CDC
STRANGE SUSPENSE STORIES
STRANGE
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No 19
©
A CHARLTON PUBLICATION
operator--YOU'VE GOT TO GET THROUGH--he's innocent!
10¢
Ditko

STRANGE SUSPENSE STORIES Volume 1, Number 19 July, 1954
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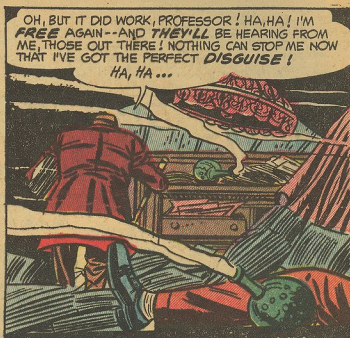
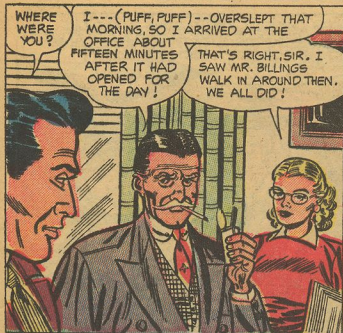
The following outstanding magazines are easily identified on their covers by the words A CHARLTON PUBLICATION.
ATOMIC MOUSE * COWBOY WESTERN HEROES * CRIME AND JUSTICE * FUNNY ANIMALS
EH! dig this crazy comic * HAUNTED * HOT RODS AND RACING CARS * ZOO FUNNIES
LASH LARUE WESTERN * ROCKY LANE WESTERN * RACKET SQUAD * SIX-GUN HEROES
ROMANTIC STORY * SCIENCE-FICTION SPACE ADVENTURES * STRANGE SUSPENSE STORIES
SWEETHEARTS * TEX RITTER WESTERN * TRUE LIFE SECRETS * TV TEENS * THE THING
Every effort is made to insure that these comic magazines contain the highest quality of wholesome entertainment.

HE WAS RIGHT! FOR SOON AFTERWARDS, A SERIES OF VICIOUS ROBBERIES AND MURDERS ROCKED THE CITY...

AND, AT POLICE HEADQUARTERS, LT. STEVE ANDERSON AND SGT. JOE BRODY WERE TRYING TO PIECE OUT THE CLUES...

I'VE CHECKED THESE REPORTS FOR HOURS, STEVE, AND I CAN'T FIND A SINGLE THING WE CAN GO ON!

THERE SEEMS TO BE A PATTERN TO ALL THESE CRIMES, JOE... I KNOW THIS SOUNDS CRAZY, BUT ---IT LOOKS LIKE LEFTY RICCARDI'S WORK!

20 MINUTES LATER, THE TWO DETECTIVES STEPPED INSIDE THE HANDSOMELY-DECORATED OFFICE OF JOHN BILLINGS...

WHERE WERE YOU?
I---(PUFF, PUFF)--OVERSLEPT THAT MORNING, SO I ARRIVED AT THE OFFICE ABOUT FIFTEEN MINUTES AFTER IT HAD OPENED FOR THE DAY!
THAT'S RIGHT, SIR. I SAW MR. BILLINGS WALK IN AROUND THEN. WE ALL DID!
IN OTHER WORDS, YOU DON'T KNOW WHO COMMITTED THE ROBBERY, DO YOU, MR. BILLINGS?
OF COURSE NOT! SURELY YOU DON'T THINK I ---WHY THAT'S PREPOSTEROUS!
RELAX, BILLINGS. WE'RE JUST TRYING TO GET THE FACTS!

A FEW MOMENTS LATER, THE DETECTIVES WALKED OUT, TWO VERY PUZZLED MEN...

JOE---THAT CHARACTER'S ALIBI IS TOO SMOOTH! HE TALKS AND ACTS LIKE...LIKE RICCARDI! NO... IT'S FANTASTIC! SHEER COINCIDENCE!
I DUNNO, STEVE. I GOT THAT SAME IMPRESSION! HOW ABOUT THE WAY HE BROKE THAT MATCH? THAT WAS LEFTY RICCARDI TO A T!

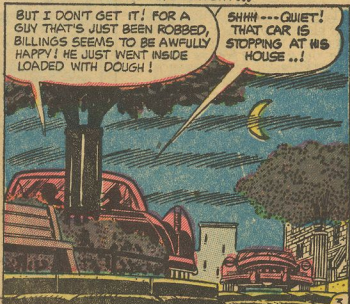
HE WAS LEFT-HANDED, TOO, WASN'T HE? HM...OKAY, JOE.. WE'RE GOING TO CHECK UP ON THIS GUY FROM A TO Z!
I HOPE YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING! IT'S GOING TO BE A TOUGH JOB!

TWO DAYS PASSED...THE TWO MEN WORKED THEMSELVES TO DEATH TRYING TO SOLVE THE ENIGMA OF THE MYSTERIOUS MR. BILLINGS! FINALLY...
AW--IT'S NO USE, STEVE! THE GUY IS CLEAN! THE ONLY BAD THING HE EVER DID WAS TO PAL AROUND WITH A TRICKSTER CALLED "PROFESSOR" ARNO, THE LAST COUPLE OF MONTHS!
THAT'S IT!

BOTH THE PROFESSOR AND THE JURYMAN ON THE RICCARDI CASE WERE KILLED THE SAME WEEK! AND BILLINGS HAS THE MANNERISMS OF LEFTY RICCARDI--THERE'S A CONNECTION, SOMEHOW!
GREAT SCOTT! YOU'RE RIGHT!

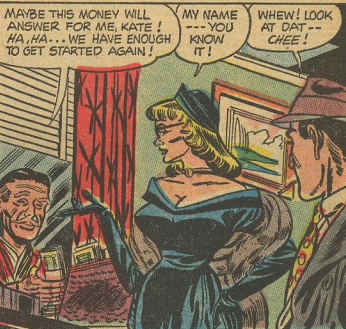
BUT SEVERAL DAYS OF SHADOWING JOHN BILLINGS PROVED FRUITLESS--UNTIL, ONE NIGHT...
BUT I DON'T GET IT! FOR A GUY THAT'S JUST BEEN ROBBED, BILLINGS SEEMS TO BE AWFULLY HAPPY! HE JUST WENT INSIDE LOADED WITH DOUGH!
SHHH---QUIET! THAT CAR IS STOPPING AT HIS HOUSE..!

LISTEN CAREFULLY, JOE! I'M GOING TO FIND OUT WHAT'S HAPPENING THERE---SEND A CALL TO HEAD-QUARTERS! IF I'M NOT BACK HERE IN FIFTEEN MINUTES--BREAK IN!

CHECK!

LT. STEVE ANDERSON RAN SWIFTLY UP TO THE HOUSE AND HID HIMSELF WITHIN HEARING DISTANCE OF THE TERRACED LIBRARY. IT WAS APPARENT THAT SOMETHING *BIG* WAS GOING TO OCCUR...

NOW I'VE HEARD IT ALL !
BUT IT'S GOTTA BE LEFTY ! HE KNOWS OUR NAMES ...HE, HE KNOWS -- EVERYTHING !
LET'S GET OUT OF HERE -- I GET THE CREEPS LOOKING AT HIM ! HE'S KAPUT -- CRAZY !

CRAZY AM I ? I'LL GET RID OF YOU, HEINRICH, JUST LIKE I DID THE PROFESSOR AND THAT COURT STOOGE ... NEVER TOOK TO YOU ANYWAY !
YA-A-A-A-H !
BANG
BANG

NOW GET THIS -- ALL OF YOU ! WHAT I SAY GOES ! STARTING TOMORROW, WE'RE GOING TO PULL BANK JOBS ! WE GOT EVERYTHING HERE TO MAKE IT A SUCCESS. SO THE NEXT GUY THAT CALLS ME CRAZY, GETS IT RIGHT BETWEEN THE EYES !
S-SURE, BOSS ! WE-WE WERE ONLY KIDDING !

MEANWHILE, LT. STEVE ANDERSON, HEARING SHOTS, RAN INSIDE THE HOUSE, AND ...
OKAY, BILLINGS ... I'VE HEARD ENOUGH -! YOU'RE UNDER ARREST !
IT'S A COPPER !
YOU DIRTY RAT -- YOU WERE SPYING ON ME, EH ! WELL -- TAKE THAT..!

OWW -- I'M HIT ... MY SHOULDER --!
-- URRGGHH !!
BANG
BANG

SECONDS LATER, THE POLICE, LED BY SGT. JOE BRODY, RUSHED INSIDE THE HOUSE, AND ...

BILLINGS IS DEAD !
I'VE GOT A HUNCH THAT THIS CASE ISN'T OVER ! LET'S GET OVER TO STATE PRISON RIGHT AWAY -- WE DON'T HAVE MUCH TIME !

AS THE CAR ROARED THROUGH THE NIGHT TOWARD STATE PRISON, A FURIOUS RAINSTORM BROKE OUT, SHATTERING THE STILLNESS OF THE COUNTRYSIDE ...

AND, AS THE GOVERNOR'S LAUGHTER RANG OUT IN THE RAIN-FILLED NIGHT, THE HEARSE SLOWLY DISAPPEARED BEHIND A CURVE IN THE ROAD--INSIDE A DEAD MAN WHO HAD WANTED TO DIE!

The End

OWL BLENHEIM WAS HOT AS A FIFTY-CENT PISTOL...THE LAW WAS BREATHING ON HIS NECK! BUT INSTEAD OF FINDING SAFETY IN THE HIDEOUT HE HAD SELECTED, HE BECAME...

ALL BURNT UP!

I GOT HALF A MIND TO PUNCH YOUR HEAD OFF...

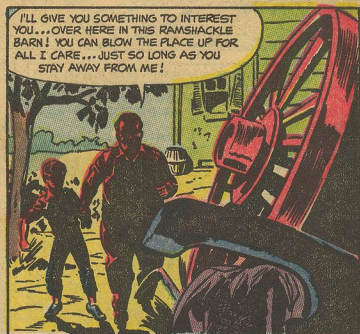
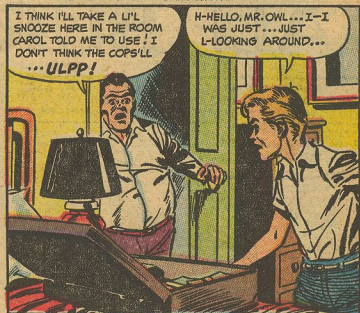
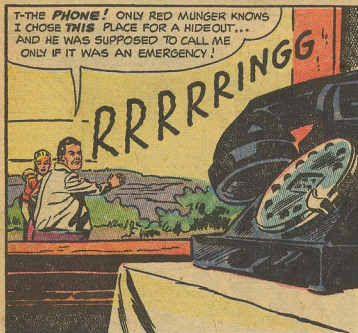
N-NO...PLEASE, OWL! HE'S ONLY A LAD...JUST WORKING OFF ALL HIS EXCESS ENERGY! YOU'VE GOT TO SHOW MORE UNDERSTANDING FOR A CHILD OF HIS TENDER YEARS!

SOMEHOW, OWL BLENHEIM ***DID*** CONTROL HIS TEMPER...UNTIL LATER THAT AFTERNOON...

I THINK I'LL TAKE A LI'L SNOOZE HERE IN THE ROOM CAROL TOLD ME TO USE! I DON'T THINK THE COPS'LL ...***ULPP!***

H-HELLO, MR. OWL...I-I WAS JUST...JUST L-LOOKING AROUND...

I'LL TEACH YOU TO SNOOP AROUND MY STUFF...BURST INTO MY ARSENAL ...AND NOW OPEN THE VALISE WITH THE LOOT I GRABBED ON THAT FIRST FEDERAL BANK JOB OVER IN TOTTENHAM!

L-LEMME GO, WILL YOU? A GUY'S GOTTA HAVE S-SOMETHING TO INTEREST 'IM...

THE HAMMERING AND CLANKING CONTINUED FOR HOURS, AND OWL BLENHEIM HEAVED A SIGH OF RELIEF. BUT IT WAS SHORT-LIVED...

FIFTEEN MINUTES LATER, OBLIVIOUS TO THE NOISE EMANATING FROM THE BARN, OWL BLENHEIM FINISHED HIS PACKING AND PREPARED TO MAKE A HURRIED DEPARTURE...

THIS TIME NOTHING'S GONNA STOP ME, PEA-BRAIN! I'M GONNA KILL YOU...THEN YOUR OLD LADY! BUT BEFORE I DO, CONFESS...YOU SWIPED THE GAS FROM MY TANK, DIDN'T YOU?
Y-YES...FOR THIS THING YOU SUGGESTED I BUILD...

SAY YOUR PRAYERS, SAMMY...YOU MADE IT HOT FOR ME ONCE TOO OFTEN!
D-DON'T COME ANY CLOSER, MR. OWL! I-I FOLLOWED THE INSTRUCTIONS IN THAT MECHANIC'S BOOK EXACTLY...AND THIS THING'LL WORK! I-I'M WARNING YOU... HERE GOES!

HISSSSSS

T-TURN THAT THING OFF... OR I'LL...I'LL... ARGHHHH!

DUCK, KID...THAT GUY'S A KILLER! AND TOSS THAT JUNK ASIDE... RUN FOR YOUR LIFE!
POLICE
SCREECH!

BLENHEIM'S DEAD! AS COLD...ER...HOT ...AS A MACKEREL!
J-JUMPIN' JEHOSOPHAT...IT WORKED! I-I ACTUALLY DID BUILD A FLAME-THROWER... JUST LIKE THE ONE IN THE BOOK! I'M SURE GLAD MR. OWL CAME HERE... AND GIMME THE IDEA!
The End

IT WAS VITAL THAT GUSTAV PERRIN GET BACK THAT PACKAGE HE HAD HIDDEN WHEN THE POLICE WERE CLOSING IN! HE WAS PREPARED TO ***KILL*** IN ORDER TO GET HIS HANDS ON HIS...

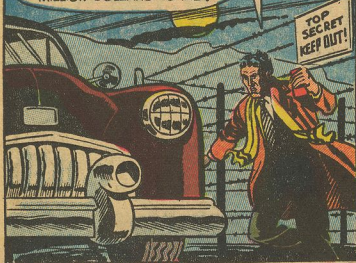
SURPRISE PACKAGE!!

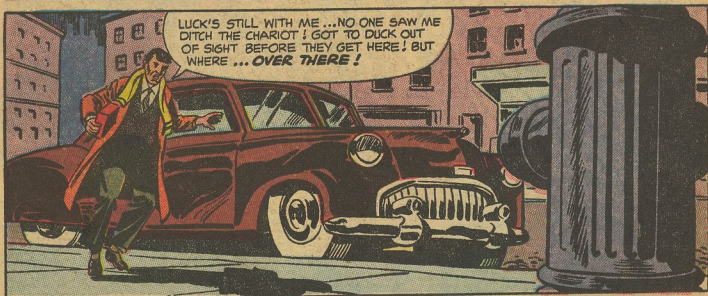
NO ONE IN SIGHT... JUST ME AND THE GUARD CARRYING WHAT I'VE COME TO GET! ***NOW'S*** THE TIME TO STRIKE!

H-HEY! WHAT'RE YOU... ***ARGHHH!!***

SECRET WEAPONS KEEP OUT!

DICK GIORDANO

THERE'S THE CAR... I THINK I'M GOING TO MAKE IT! FOR MORE THAN A MONTH I'VE BEEN WAITING TO GET MY HANDS ON THIS PACKAGE... THE MINIATURE EXPERIMENTAL A-BOMB INSIDE OUGHT TO BE WORTH A MILLION DOLLARS TO ME!
TOP SECRET KEEP OUT!

THE CAR LURCHED FORWARD WITH A THUNDEROUS ROAR. MILE AFTER MILE GUSTAV PERRIN TWISTED AND TURNED, TRYING TO THROW OFF HIS DESPERATE PURSUERS, BUT...
I'VE DONE EVERYTHING BUT TURN THIS HEAP INSIDE OUT, AND THEY'RE STILL ON MY TAIL! GOT TO THINK FAST... WE'RE IN TOWN ALREADY!

LUCK'S STILL WITH ME... NO ONE SAW ME DITCH THE CHARIOT! GOT TO DUCK OUT OF SIGHT BEFORE THEY GET HERE! BUT WHERE ... OVER THERE!

T-THEIR SIRENS... CLOSING IN! THEY'RE ZEROED IN ON ME, ALL RIGHT... ONLY WAY I CAN SLIP OUT OF THIS IS TO DITCH THE PACKAGE!

N-NOT A SECOND TO LOSE... I'LL STASH THE BUNDLE IN THIS COAT POCKET, THEN PICK IT UP LATER!

NO USE TALKING, BERT... I'VE MADE MY MIND UP TO DO IT! ALL THE ARRANGEMENTS ARE IN ORDER... IT'S THE ONLY WAY FOR ME! SO LONG, PAL!
I'VE GOT TO KEEP MY EYE ON THIS SKINNY GUY! IF HE SHOULD ACCIDENTALLY DROP THAT PACKAGE, I'D HATE TO THINK WHAT'D HAPPEN!

THAT OTHER PACKAGE ON THE FLOOR...IT MUST BELONG TO HIM! MAKE IT EASIER FOR ME TO TRAIL HIM AFTER I GET RID OF THE COPS!
YOU...DOWN AT THE END OF THE BAR...STAY WHERE YOU ARE!

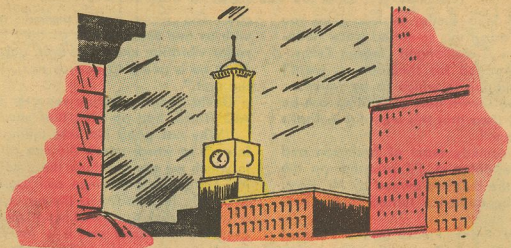
F-FUNNY...IT'S NOT ON HIM! ALL RIGHT, MISTER...WHERE'D YOU HIDE IT?
I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU GUYS ARE TALKING ABOUT! IF YOU BEEN TRAILING ME LIKE YOU CLAIM, WHERE WOULD I HAVE BEEN ABLE TO DITCH THIS PACKAGE YOU'RE AFTER? YOU GOT THE WRONG GUY!

W-WELL, I'LL BE FRIED IN FAT! I COULD'VE SWORN THAT HE...
MY LUCK'S HOLDING OUT! THEY'RE GOING TO LET ME GO...I'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE FAST, WITHOUT LOOKING TOO ANXIOUS! THAT BAG-OF-BONES WITH MY PACKAGE CAN'T HAVE GONE TOO FAR!

THERE HE GOES, ACROSS THE STREET! I'LL TAIL HIM TO A NICE SECLUDED SPOT, THEN WHAM!

INTO THE KEYSTONE BUILDING. EH? I'LL HAVE TO BIDE MY TIME BEFORE I PUT THE SLUG ON THIS JOKER...AND JUST PRAY THAT HE DOESN'T LET THAT PACKAGE SLIP!

H-HE'S HEADING FOR THE OBSERVATION TOWER! MAYBE IF I RUSH I CAN GET INTO THE SAME ELEVATOR ...TAKE CARE OF THE SKINNY GUY AND THE OPERATOR AT THE SAME TIME! T-THE DOOR...
OBSERVATION TOWER

IS GUSTAV PERRIN'S DIRE PREDICTION ABOUT TO COME TRUE? WILL THE HORRIBLE WEAPON HE HID IN THE STRANGER'S POCKET ACTUALLY DEVASTATE THE CITY? SEND **YOUR** IDEA OF THE FINALE TO ***SURPRISE PACKAGE*** TO ALFRED V. FAGO, 1472 BROADWAY, NEW YORK, N.Y. THE BEST SYNOPSIS SUBMITTED WILL BE ILLUSTRATED IN AN EARLY ISSUE OF ***STRANGE SUSPENSE STORIES!***.... THE WINNER GETS ***FULL CREDIT*** AND ***$10.00 IN CASH!***

"DESTRUCTIVE DEATH"

Jan Sagoro pointed his finger directly at Mr. William Mellinger.

"You know I am the greatest violinist in the world. Why do you refuse to let me give a concert at your opera house? This must be part of a conspiracy to prevent the world from listening to my wonderful music. I give you exactly two days to change your mind. Otherwise I shall wreck all your financial interests. For, not only can my music create, it can also destroy."

"Get out of here before I have you thrown out," shouted Mr. William Mellinger. "I don't have to listen to the ravings of a mad man. Because I had a little pity in my heart I permitted you to play at that charity concert. Get out and stay away from my office. Otherwise I shall notify the police that you have threatened me."

Mr. Max Katz, of M.K. Recordings, was a very busy man. Finally he spoke to his secretary.

"Send in that crazy violinist. I am going to give him a final warning. If he comes here again, I shall prefer charges against him. I understand he threatened Mr. Mellinger this morning. I can break that fellow with one hand tied behind my back. Send him in now."

Jan Sagoro had a sneer on his twisted face, and he spoke first.

"You refuse to let me make recordings for your company. I can wreck all your business enterprises with my violin. For, I have discovered a simple but great secret. You have until tomorrow to change your mind. I want to record my theme song. It is called "Destructive Death." It will make you rich. Refuse me, and you are a ruined man."

"I shall notify the police at once," snapped back Mr. Max Katz. "This is blackmail. I shall swear out a warrant for your arrest. Get out of here before I count three, or I'll throw you out myself."

Mrs. Ethel Rivkin was a very happy woman. She had come all the way from her small town in Kansas to the Big City. And her niece, Helen Bailey, was showing her the sights.

"See that building in the distance," said Helen Bailey. "That's the largest office building in the world. It is owned by William Mellinger, who does much to spread good music in this country."

Mrs. Ethel Rivkin gazed at the tall building. And then she squinted her eyes.

"I must be dizzy, Helen. Seems to me that the building is swaying. I guess I did a bit too much at my age."

"The building looks as though it is swaying to my eyes," remarked Helen Bailey. "Must be some kind of an optical illusion. Oh . . . oh . . . it is falling down . . . now I don't see it!"

Most of the people who worked in the office building had left by five on that tragic day. But the two-hundred-and-sixty who were left behind died a terrible death, as steel and brick crashed down into the street. Twelve other buildings were smashed, and the total death list, including those caught by the debris in cars, amounted to more than four-hundred.

"That building was perfectly safe," said George Krebs, head of the building inspection service of the city. "I had my men check over every inch of it. The papers call it sabotage. How was it done?"

The D.A., John Prager, wasn't exactly the happiest man in town. He had his duty to perform.

"I spoke to Mr. Mellinger, and he told me about the threats made by Jan Sagoro. The police have an order to pick him up. But how can we show he did it? Mr. Max Katz of M.K. Recordings told me a similar story. It could be just a coincidence."

"But if the studio building owned by Mr.

Katz collapsed in a similar manner then you would have to admit this so-called crazy violinist was behind it," challenged George Krebs.

The D.A. shrugged his shoulders. It wasn't a delightful situation in which to be found.

"I have to be shown how a building can be destroyed, and then that this man did it. That's all I can say now."

The famous comedy team of Anderson and Thompson were doing a TV program on the tenth floor of the building owned by Mr. Katz. A woman in the audience turned to her husband.

"I feel dizzy, Frank. Please take me out of here. Seems as though the building is swaying a bit."

The husband never had a chance to answer, as the entire structure collapsed. Hundreds were killed, and the few taken out alive died soon after.

The D.A. sat in the laboratory of the Crime Research Institute and looked at a demonstration that was to be given for his benefit and also for the members of the press who were present.

"When I cause this tuning fork to vibrate, you will see the glass tumbler on the other end of this long table split into hundreds of bits," said Professor Michael Spon.

The professor hit the tuning fork with a small stick, and a few seconds later the glass tumbler was shattered. Then he moved a skeleton building made of steel girders on the table. He lifted a violin.

"I shall play a note, and you will observe this small building as it collapses."

The professor lifted the violin and took the bow in his hand. He played the same note over and over. The building began to sway and finaly toppled over on the table.

"What's the secret to all this?" asked the D.A.

"A simple scientific fact," explained the Professor. "Every thing has a basic vibration point. If I can find that point, then I can make it vibrate. Actually I found the vibration points first of the glass tumbler and also of the small building. Somehow this Jan Sagoro has found a method of determining the vibration point of any building. Then he plays a note on his violin with the same vibration. He keeps it up until the building collapses. He must either be somewhere in the vicinity or use some kind of a broadcast unit to send the vibrations in the direction of the object he desires to destroy. Clear, gentlemen?"

The members of the press asked a variety of questions, and then a tired D.A. came right to the point.

"Unless we catch this mad man, there is nothing to stop him from wrecking the entire city. The Army has promised to cooperate with us and send us one of their highly secret radar vibration units. However, unless we know what he is going to destroy next, we can't use the unit."

David Sanger, feature reporter on the HERALD-TIMES, had an idea that sounded good.

"Why not goad him into telling us what he intends to wreck next? We can all run articles in which we say we think these collapses were just accidents. If this man can cause a building to smash, let him tell us the name. We will get a lot of crack-pots who want publicity. However, we can make sure it is Jan Sagoro by a simple technique. He will have to tell the contents of his last talks with Mr. Mellinger and with Mr. Katz."

The idea sounded good, and in a small joint at the waterfront, Jan Sagoro read the morning newspaper.

"So, they doubt I was the genius," he half shouted in the room, as he got up from his seat. "I'll wreck the New River Bridge. I know its vibration point. I'll call them from a pay phone because they can't trace a dialed call."

Captain Roy Kulman looked at the dial of his radar unit. The needle was moving slowly.

"The vibrations are coming from the bridge itself," he told the D.A. "That means your crazy musician managed to hide himself there. Contact your patrol cars at once. Close in on the man. I'm going to use our deflector-rejector unit and see how it works. Actually it throws back the vibrations to the source that sends them out."

Patrol cars 36 and 45 hurried to the center of the bridge. There on the catwalk they saw a man playing a violin. There was a slight sway to the bridge. All motor traffic, pedestrian and automobiles had been diverted from both ends of the bridge.

"We got orders to get him alive if possible," said Sergeant Mike O'Donlevy. "We'll rush him together."

As long as he was destined to live, the police officer was going to tell the impossible thing that happened.

"All of a sudden this crazy guy dropped his violin. It was a funny song he was playing. He toppled over. Know what happened to him? He just fell apart. Yes sir, into hundreds of little pieces. Maybe there is a certain justice in this world. He died like the way he made buildings fall."

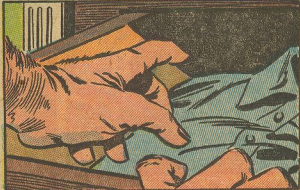
Captain Roy Kulman had a comment to make to his superiors in Washington:

"Deflector-rejector unit worked perfectly."

David Sanger, the reporter, merely wrote:

"It was 'Destructive Death' — but not as he planned it."

The End

YOU KNOW TOO MUCH!
HE HAD A POUNDING HEADACHE. THAT'S HOW IT ALWAYS STARTED-- WITH A POUNDING HEADACHE...
HE TRIED TO FIGHT IT, BUT IT WAS NO USE. THE FEELING KEPT RISING INSIDE OF HIM LIKE HISSING STEAM INSIDE A BOILER.
HE FOUND HIMSELF CLIMBING THE STAIRS...
HE WAS UP IN THE BEDROOM NOW, OPENING THE DRAWER. FROM THE OTHER BEDROOM, HE COULD HEAR THE KIDS BREATHING HEAVILY IN THEIR SLEEP. FROM DOWNSTAIRS CAME THE STEADY CLICKING OF HIS WIFE'S CROCHETING NEEDLES. THE POUNDING IN HIS HEAD WAS EVEN WORSE. HE WAS WINCING AS HIS HAND GROPED INSIDE THE DRAWER FOR THE SECRET COMPARTMENT...
GIORDANO ALASCIA

HE WAS CLOMPING DOWN AGAIN, DRESSED FOR THE STREET, WHEN HIS WIFE'S VOICE CALLED TO HIM ...

YOU KNOW I DON'T WANT TO TIE YOU DOWN, AL! BUT I'VE BEEN READING THOSE STORIES IN THE PAPER ABOUT ***THE KNIFE!*** YOU KNOW, THAT CRAZY KILLER... THE ONE WHO STABS TOTAL STRANGERS IN THE DARK! PLEASE, AL ...STAY INSIDE. I'D GO MAD IF ANYTHING HAPPENED TO YOU!

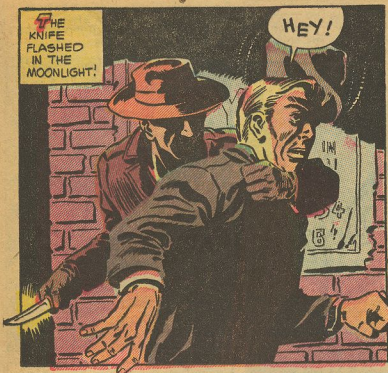
FOR A MOMENT, HE ALMOST WEAKENED, ALMOST WRIGGLED OUT OF HIS COAT AND DROPPED INTO A CHAIR-- BUT THEN THE POUNDING IN HIS HEAD STARTED AGAIN: ***THUMP- THUMP- THUMP...***

HE CAUGHT A CROSS-TOWN BUS AND STOOD SWAYING IN THE AISLE --AL BARTLETT, MR. AVERAGE AMERICAN, WITH A WIFE AT HOME, TWO KIDS, A HOUSE WITH A MORTGAGE, A SECOND-HAND CAR---AND IN HIS COAT POCKET...

LEAVING THE BUS, HE STATIONED HIMSELF IN THE SHADOWY ENTRANCE OF A DARK ALLEY. THE POUNDING INSIDE HIS HEAD WAS WORSE THAN EVER. HIS MOUTH FELT DRY AND SOUR. THE HILT OF THE KNIFE WAS DAMP WITH SWEAT AS HE GRIPPED IT TIGHTLY INSIDE HIS POCKET...

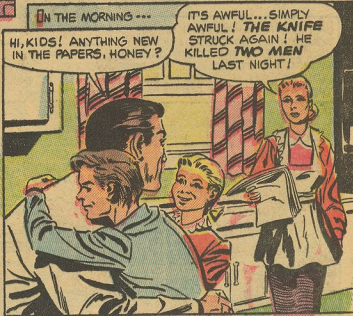
THE KNIFE FLASHED IN THE MOONLIGHT!

HEY!

AAAARGHH!

THE HEADACHE WAS GONE NOW. THE POUNDING HAD STOPPED. HE WALKED AWAY BRISKLY-- AL BARTLETT, MR. AVERAGE AMERICAN ON HIS WAY HOME TO THE WIFE AND KIDS... AFTER A BREATH OF AIR...

IN THE MORNING ---

HI, KIDS! ANYTHING NEW IN THE PAPERS, HONEY?

IT'S AWFUL... SIMPLY AWFUL! **THE KNIFE** STRUCK AGAIN! HE KILLED **TWO MEN** LAST NIGHT!

SWEAT PIMPLED HIS FOREHEAD AS HE READ THE ARTICLE IN THE PAPER. HIS HANDS TREMBLED. ***TWO VICTIMS***, THE ARTICLE SAID--AND HE REMEMBERED KILLING ONLY ***ONE***!

IT HAD HAPPENED BEFORE--A ***KNIFE KILLING*** THAT HE COULDN'T REMEMBER! IT WAS BAD ENOUGH TO BE UNDER SOME CRAZY COMPULSION TO KILL STRANGERS... BUT KILLING WHILE ***BLACKING OUT***... THAT REALLY SCARED HIM!

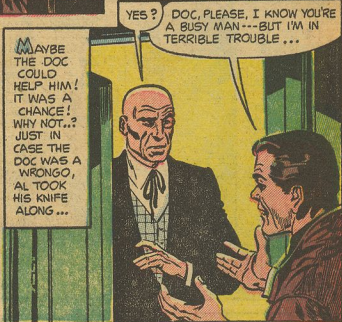
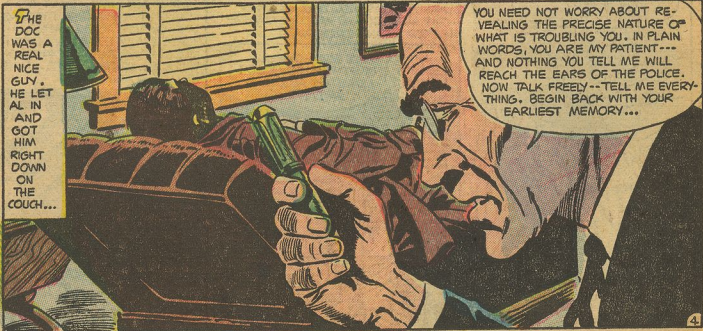
HE WAS SICK, ALL RIGHT. SICK WITH THE HORRIBLE FEAR THAT DURING ONE OF THOSE BLACK-OUTS, HE MIGHT TURN THE KNIFE AGAINST HIS OWN WIFE AND KIDS!
YEAH... YOU BETTER CALL THE OFFICE. I-I'M SICK... REAL SICK.

HE STAYED IN BED ALL DAY---AND ALL DAY HIS EYES KEPT WANDERING TO THE BUREAU WHERE THE KNIFE LAY IN ITS SECRET COMPARTMENT...
ONLY ONE! I CAN ONLY REMEMBER KILLING ONE LAST NIGHT!

THAT NIGHT WAS HIDEOUS WITH A DREAM THAT SAW HIM STANDING OVER HIS FAMILY'S CORPSES WITH THE DRIPPING KNIFE IN HIS HAND...
NO... NO!!

IF THE STRAIN HAD KEPT UP, HE WOULD HAVE CRACKED... WOULD HAVE GONE TO THE POLICE AND GIVEN HIMSELF UP, RATHER THAN ENDANGER THE WIFE AND THE KIDS--- BUT THE NEXT MORNING HE SAW THIS WRITE-UP IN THE PAPER...

DR. HENRY LIVINGSTON, PSYCHIATRIST, SPECIALIZES IN QUIRKS OF THE CRIMINAL MIND. HMMM....
DAILY TIMES

MAYBE THE DOC COULD HELP HIM! IT WAS A CHANCE! WHY NOT..? JUST IN CASE THE DOC WAS A WRONGO, AL TOOK HIS KNIFE ALONG...
YES?
DOC, PLEASE, I KNOW YOU'RE A BUSY MAN---BUT I'M IN TERRIBLE TROUBLE...

THE DOC WAS A REAL NICE GUY. HE LET AL IN AND GOT HIM RIGHT DOWN ON THE COUCH...
YOU NEED NOT WORRY ABOUT REVEALING THE PRECISE NATURE OF WHAT IS TROUBLING YOU. IN PLAIN WORDS, YOU ARE MY PATIENT--- AND NOTHING YOU TELL ME WILL REACH THE EARS OF THE POLICE. NOW TALK FREELY--TELL ME EVERYTHING. BEGIN BACK WITH YOUR EARLIEST MEMORY...

DOC, YOU'RE WONDERFUL! THE WHOLE THING IS CLEAR TO ME NOW! BUT ***HOW*** DID YOU DO IT SO ***FAST***? I THOUGHT THIS KIND OF TREATMENT LASTED MONTHS AND MONTHS! BELIEVE IT OR NOT--I FEEL BETTER ALREADY WHAT'S THE MATTER, DOC--YOU DON'T LOOK SO GOOD.

I-I HAVE A HEADACHE. EXCUSE ME, PLEASE, FOR A MOMENT. I'LL BE RIGHT BACK.

HE WENT TO THE NEXT ROOM. HOW DO I KNOW HE'S NOT PHONING THE COPS RIGHT NOW...? CAN I TRUST HIM...? HE KNOWS TOO MUCH! WHAT IF ONE OF MY VICTIMS WAS A RELATIVE OF HIS...?

THIS'LL BE MY LAST KNIFING! TOO BAD -- BUT IT HAS TO BE! HE KNOWS TOO MUCH!

THE QUICK MOVING SHADOW ON THE WALL WARNED AL... BUT NOT SOON ENOUGH!
HEY!

AAAARGH!

AL WAS DYING NOW ...
DOC-- W-WHY DID YOU... (GASP) ...DO IT?!
FOOL! MY STEP-FATHER WAS CRUEL TO MY MOTHER, TOO! HOW ELSE COULD I HAVE KNOWN SO SOON WHAT WAS AT THE ROOT OF YOUR TROUBLE?

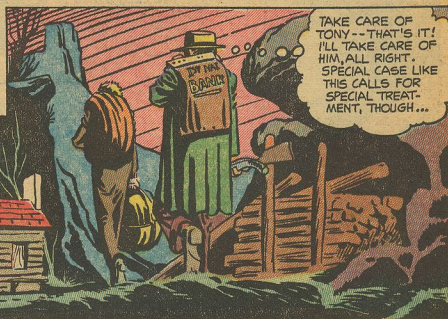
TH-THEN THE KNIFINGS I COULDN'T ..... (GASP) .... REMEMBER ...YOU DID THEM!
EXACTLY! AND SOONER OR LATER YOU'D HAVE BEGUN WONDERING AT THE SPEED OF MY ANALYSIS... AND YOU'D HAVE GUESSED! THAT'S WHY I HAD TO KILL YOU-- YOU KNEW TOO MUCH! AND NOW SINCE YOUR FAMILY MIGHT KNOW THAT YOU CAME HERE TODAY...

...I'LL HAVE TO USE MY KNIFE ON THEM TOO!!

TAKE THAT ARM AWAY, TONY--YOU CRAZY ? WHAT IF THE CHOPPER SEES ?

THAT OLD HAS-BEEN'S SLEEPIN' LIKE A PIG BACK THERE--

BAN

SOON...
SO THAT'S THE PLACE ...GUESS YOU'LL BE MISSIN' KATIE WHEN WE'RE HOLED UP THERE, CHOPPER!
YEAH! NO SENSE IN HER COMIN' WITH US THOUGH-- SHE HAD NO PART OF THAT BANK HEIST.
UNLOADED YOUR THINGS FOR YOU, CHOPPER. GUN, SWAG, EVERYTHING...
LITTLE PEACH AREN'T YOU? REALLY TAKE CARE OF YOUR NUMBER ONE BOY...
SO LONG, BACK FOR YOU WHEN THINGS LOOK RIGHT. TAKE CARE, BABY--
TAKE CARE OF TONY--THAT'S IT! I'LL TAKE CARE OF HIM, ALL RIGHT. SPECIAL CASE LIKE THIS CALLS FOR SPECIAL TREATMENT, THOUGH...
1ST NAT BANK
THE PERFECT HIDEOUT! I GOTTA HAND IT TO YOU, CHOPPER--YOU REALLY PICK 'EM. THIS WON'T BE HARD TO TAKE.
UN-UNH. IT'S A NICE, QUIET PLACE... JUST YOU AND ME, TONY. NO SNOOPERS TO WORRY ABOUT...
GUESS WE'LL HAVE TO KEEP A FIRE GOIN'. YOU WANT ME TO GET SOME FIREWOOD, CHOPPER?
I'LL DO IT THIS TIME, TONY... WANT TO TAKE A LOOK AROUND!
AND GET OUT BEFORE I TAKE YOU APART WITH MY BARE HANDS!

DOUBLE-CROSSING RAT! SHOULD HAVE LEFT HIM IN THE GUTTER WHERE I FOUND HIM THREE YEARS AGO! HE'S GOTTA GO --- THERE'S NO OTHER WAY!

WHAT IN THE NAME OF—! TRACKS OF A COUGAR--- MOUNTAIN LION! BIG ONE, TOO!

HUNDRED AND SIXTY IF THE DEVIL WEIGHS AN OUNCE! MUST COME POKIN' AROUND HERE LOOKIN' FOR FOOD --THAT'S IT, SURE!

YOU'RE GONNA GET YOUR FEED, KITTY... A REGULAR BANQUET... A FEAST ON RAT!

LATER...
SOME CHOW! FIGURE I MIGHT CATCH A LITTLE SNOOZE, CHOPPER.
NOT FORGETTING IT WILL BE YOUR TURN TO BRING IN WOOD, ARE YOU, TONY?

NUH-UNH, I AIN'T FORGETTIN', CHOPPER. IF I DON'T WAKE WHEN THE FIRE BURNS DOWN--
THEN I'LL WAKE YOU, TONY--- DON'T WORRY.

NOTHING TO DO BUT WAIT NOW. WOOD'LL SOON BE GONE...AND THAT MOUNTAIN-CAT SHOULD BE OUT--LISTEN!

R-R-R-R-
HE'S CLOSE BY! HAVE TO MOVE FAST! THIS IS THE PAY-OFF, TONY!

...SLEEPING LIKE A BABY...DOESN'T SUSPECT A THING...IT'S JUST AS WELL...EASY ENOUGH TO SET ONE OF THESE THINGS, TOO.

THERE--IT'S DONE. AND ANCHORED TO THAT ROOT! OUGHT TO HOLD A GRIZZLY FAST BY THE LOOKS OF IT!

WIND'S JUST RIGHT...OUGHTA TAKE THE SCENT OF THESE FOOD-SCRAPS TO THAT COUGAR... BRING HIM DOWN HERE TO HIS MAIN COURSE!

WAKE UP, TONY...GUESS I DOZED OFF MYSELF. BETTER GET SOME WOOD IN HERE BEFORE THAT FIRE GOES OUT!
HUH--OH, YEAH, SURE, CHOPPER---ON MY WAY!

GUESS YOU WERE SMART TAKING THE DAYTIME TRIP, CHOPPER. KIND OF WEIRD AND SPOOKY AROUND HERE NOW AND--WHAT'S THAT?

THERE'S SOMETHING UP THERE, CHOPPER, CAN YOU HEAR ME? IT--IT'S A MOUNTAIN LION!

AND THEN---
OW-WW!
WHAM

I-I STUMBLED INTO A TRAP, CHOPPER! HELP ME, CHOPPER ---HELP!

SURE I'M GONNA HELP YOU! I'M GONNA BLAST YOU IN TWO IF YOU SLIP OUT OF THAT TRAP, LOVER BOY!
WHAT? NAW, CHOPPER--- YOU GOT IT ALL WRONG! THERE WAS NOTHING LIKE THAT BETWEEN KATE AND ME! YOU GOTTA BELIEVE ME, CHOPPER!

UN-UNH. THIS, I'M GONNA ENJOY, TONY. NICE OF KATE NOT TO LET ME FORGET MY GUN. I MIGHT NEED IT!

BUT--THE COUGAR, CHOPPER! RIP ME TO RIBBONS---HELP!!

TONY DIED QUICKLY IN THE COUGAR'S FIRST SNARLING POUNCE...
A-A-A-R-R

NOT SATISFIED, EH? COMING FOR ME! COME AHEAD THEN, COUGAR--READY FOR YOU!

BUT...
GUN WON'T FIRE--EMPTY! KATE!
CLICK!

...SHE FIGURED TONY AND I MIGHT HAVE A SET-TO! EMPTIED THE GUN TO HELP ---NO!

THAT WAS THE LAST WORD EVER SPOKEN BY CHOPPER, BRAINS AND BRAWN OF ASSORTED BANKING ENTERPRISES...

HE WAS A WRONG GUY--AND OFTEN WRONG. BUT NOW, WHEN A SATED COUGAR CREPT BACK TO ITS LAIR, HE WAS RIGHT ABOUT THAT HIDEOUT. IT WAS REALLY A NICE QUIET PLACE!
The End

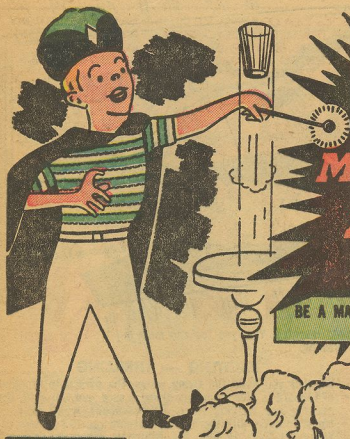
DISCOVERING THAT HIS WIFE AND NICK RUSSELL, HIS AERIAL PARTNER, ARE INVOLVED IN A SECRET LOVE AFFAIR, ALFREDO TARBELLO PLOTS TO KILL THE MAN WHO IS WOOING TINA AWAY FROM HIM. AND SO, UP ON THE PERILOUS HIGH-WIRE, AS THE TWO PERFORMERS GRIMLY REHEARSE THEIR DANGEROUS ACT, THERE IS ***HIGH-TENSION!***

G-GOOD LORD! HE COULD HAVE MEANT THAT WE WERE REHEARSING WITHOUT THE SAFETY NET! IF...IF IT'S NOT DOWN THERE, I-I'LL PLUNGE TO...TO MY DEATH!

AT PRECISELY THAT MOMENT, A FIGURE MOVED OUT OF THE DARKNESS DOWN ON THE FLOOR OF THE BIG TOP...
NICK'S IDEA OF HAVING ME CUT THE SAFETY NET IS RISKY.. BUT IT WILL FREE US FOREVER OF ALFREDO'S MEDDLING! I SAW HIS BODY CRASHING DOWN...NICK MUST'VE SUCCEEDED IN MAKING MY CURSED HUSBAND FALL! I'D BETTER MAKE SURE...

BRRR! HE'S DEAD, ALL RIGHT...AND BARELY RECOGNIZABLE! NICK AND I WILL SAY IT WAS AN ACCID...NO! T-THIS ISN'T ALFREDO...IT'S MY LOVER!

H-HOW CAN FATE...SOB...BE SO CRUEL! THIS MUST BE MY PUNISHMENT...SOB...FOR HELPING TO PLOT ALFREDO'S DEATH!

THERE WAS A TERRIFIC CRASH, THEN GROTESQUE SILENCE. A FEW MOMENTS LATER, AFTER THE BIG TOP LIGHTS HAD BEEN TURNED ON...
HARD TO BELIEVE THAT ALL THREE OF THEM COULD'VE PILED UP LIKE THIS! THREE OF THE GREATEST AERIALISTS IN THE BUSINESS...DEAD! HOW COULD IT H-HAPPEN?
THE DIZZY HEIGHTS...THE GRUELING ROUTINES...THE HIGH-TENSION THEY WORKED UNDER! THAT'S THE ONLY POSSIBLE EXPLANATION!

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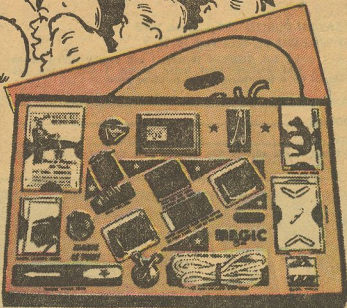
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